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Situation in Abyei

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 32 of Security Council resolution 2416 (2018), in which the Council requested to be informed of progress in implementing the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). It covers the period since the issuance of my previous report (S/2018/293), from 30 March to 7 October 2018, and should be read in conjunction with my letter to the Council dated 20 August (S/2018/778), in which I provided detailed reconfiguration recommendations, and the briefing of my Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations of 20 September,[1] in which he updated the Council on the efforts that the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan had made towards implementing the steps outlined in Council resolution 2412 (2018).

II. Abyei

A. Security situation

2. During the reporting period, insecurity in the Abyei Area related mainly to intercommunal clashes linked to the migration of the Misseriya through the Area and to the Amiet common market and weak rule of law. During the annual migration in 2018, an estimated 37,000 Misseriya pastoralists arrived in the Abyei Area then returned northwards between May and June, following the onset of the rainy season. Some pastoralists continued to remain in northern Abyei Area, because of the stable security situation, opportunities afforded by the Amiet common market and the increased access to water through quick-impact and humanitarian projects. Intercommunal relations improved through the proactive engagement of UNISFA with the communities and its robust military posture, particularly along flashpoints. Consequently, the communities have stayed within the agreed areas to avoid conflict, no longer necessitating the disengagement line first instituted by UNISFA three years ago to prevent large-scale intercommunal violence during the migration season.

3. Notwithstanding those improvements, intercommunal tension and violence around the Amiet common market persisted owing to the population influx to the Abyei Area and the presence of different communities trading at the market, including

[1] See www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13513.doc.htm.

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Darfuris, Nuer and nationals of neighbouring countries. On 27 June, two Ngok Dinka were shot dead by unidentified gunmen, believed to be Misseriya, at Wut Amath, Sector Centre. In what seemed to be a retaliatory act, on 11 July, nine armed men attacked a group of Misseriya returning from the market along the Todach-Goli road, Sector North. One Misseriya was killed and three were injured. On 15 July, one Ngok Dinka was shot dead at Dungop, Sector South, by armed men, allegedly Misseriya.

4. Tensions between the Misseriya and Nuer entering into the Abyei Area from Unity State, South Sudan, were largely centred around the south-east of the Area. On 17 April, three Misseriya and one Nuer were killed at Dem Dem, on the Mayom-Marial Achak road, Sector South. A vehicle belonging to a Nuer was also burned during the incident. On 11 May, armed men suspected to be Nuer attacked Misseriya herdsmen at Myordol, near Marial Achak, Sector South, resulting in three fatalities. The reason for the attack was not established. The period also witnessed clashes between Ngok Dinka and Nuer when, on 27 April, a Nuer was prevented by a Ngok Dinka from driving through the Amiet common market. Shortly thereafter, Nuer men mobilized and attacked Ngok Dinka, resulting in minor injuries to three persons.

5. Some intracommunal clashes also occurred during the reporting period, owing to weak rule of law and ineffective criminal and justice systems. On 5 April, within the Misseriya Awlad Kamil community at Dawas, Sector North, two persons were reported killed. There followed another clash on 6 April within the Misseriya Awlad Kamil community at Um Khaer market, Sector North, in which one person was stabbed and six others were beaten. On 20 April, armed men attacked a vehicle belonging to an international non-governmental organization (NGO) polio vaccination team at Tajelei, Sector South. In the attack, the driver was killed and three people were wounded. On 18 May, a national staff driver for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) was arrested and detained at a community protection committee security check point at the Amiet common market over a misunderstanding with the Dinka staff at the check post. A UNISFA armed escort intervened and the driver was released. On 4 September, Ngok Dinka subtribal groups clashed with each other at the market, resulting in injuries to two persons.

6. Several security incidents related to cattle rustling. On 8 April, Misseriya men rustled 51 goats from the Ngok Dinka in Mabok, Sector South. Of those, 34 were retrieved and returned to their owner. On 15 April, unidentified armed men rustled 200 Misseriya cattle at Atay-2, near Marial Achak, Sector South. Of those, 160 were recovered. On 1 May, eight unidentified men rustled 70 goats at gunpoint at Wunrouk, Sector South. The goats were later located at Makuac Alrbek, Sector South, and returned to their owner. On 16 August, a group of armed men believed to be Misseriya from the Awlad Kamil tribe rustled 31 cattle from Ngok Dinka herdsmen at Mirok, Sector Center. The cattle were recovered at Sink and El Shamam, Sector North, after the rustlers abandoned them to avoid being apprehended by UNISFA troops.

7. While the current military threat to the Abyei Area remains limited, the presence of armed groups has the potential to inflame tensions between the communities. There were nine sightings by the local population of armed men around Noong and Mulmul in Sector Centre and in Sector South, at Abyen Theny, Bokchop, Wunduop, Bachuol Malual and Abathok. Most sightings were between the Amiet common market and Abyei town and along the rivers, in Nymora and Kiir/Bahr-al-Arab. In two instances, UNISFA apprehended individuals suspected of belonging to the Sudan People's Liberation Army and other armed groups within the Abyei Area. On 30 March, a suspected Sudan People's Liberation Army soldier was arrested by UNISFA at the market. The suspect claimed he had been an officer of the Army but was currently a trader. The next morning, the suspect escaped from the Amiet common market detention centre. On 5 June, six persons suspected of being members of an armed group were arrested and detained at Goli, Sector North. On 15 June, following an

investigation, the suspects were escorted to Farouk, Sector North, where they boarded a vehicle to El Muglad, Western Kordofan, the Sudan. In September, two reports were received of armed men from Twic State, South Sudan, entering into southern Abyei Area on 16 September and 27 September. The reports could not be verified as the roads were inaccessible because of rain. The occasional presence of South Sudanese armed men in the Abyei Area and the continued presence of Sudanese police at the Diffra oil complex in Sector North remained in direct violation of the Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area (the Agreement of 20 June 2011).

8. In order to maintain relative calm in the Abyei Area, the UNISFA military component continued to maintain a robust deterrent posture, with day and night patrols. UNISFA also ensured security through the implementation of its conflict prevention and mitigation strategy; an enhanced presence in vulnerable areas, including flashpoints, such as water sites, villages adjoining rivers and the Amiet common market; the deployment of static patrols at the market and observation posts at the four watch towers; and the confiscation of weapons. More than a dozen joint security committee meetings were held each week throughout the area to provide an early warning capability and a quick response to the presence of armed groups. Furthermore, an early warning system was instituted involving the local authorities and village heads to improve the collection of information and provide a quick response by a dedicated quick-reaction force/team designated in all Sectors.

9. During the reporting period, UNISFA conducted 19,022 day and night patrols and 6,284 escort patrols. Given that the Abyei Police Service had not been established, the UNISFA police component continued its efforts to support the maintenance of law and order, with 12 or 13 joint military and police observation patrols per day throughout the Abyei Area, including interaction with community protection committees, traditional authorities and local community members. With the prevailing rainy season, special aerial patrols were conducted in addition to the regular weekly aerial patrols to monitor inaccessible waterlogged areas. From August, the national monitors of South Sudan and the Sudan have also accompanied the aerial patrols.

10. UNISFA continued its efforts to keep the Abyei Area weapons-free. On 26 June, a UNISFA patrol confiscated an assault rifle, four magazines and 20 rounds of ammunition from a Misseriya man near Marial Achak, Sector South. On 3 July, United Nations police handed him to the Government of the Sudan through the Sudanese national monitors, as witnessed by Misseriya traditional leaders. Furthermore, on 15 August, the Diffra oil police handed over three rocket-propelled grenades and one fragmentation grenade to the UNISFA Sector North battalion at Diffra, that it alleged had been fired at an oil installation. The grenades were then disposed of by the United Nations Mine Action Service.

11. During the period, the United Nations Mine Action Service continued to enable UNISFA operations in the Abyei Area through the removal of explosive remnants of war and by delivering risk education. It assessed 17,116 m^2 as safe from explosive hazards and collected and destroyed 47 explosive remnants of war and 171 rounds of ammunition. It maintained the mission's storage facility for the weapons and ammunition confiscated by UNISFA troops in line with its standard operating procedures. It continued to deliver mine risk education to the Abyei population, not only in central and southern Abyei, but also for the first time in northern Abyei, the latter through a partnership with a local Sudanese NGO. In total during the reporting period, 39,087 people (14,866 boys, 12,546 girls, 6,328 men and 5,347 women) were given mine risk education in 1,081 sessions. Teams from the Mine Action Service

also distributed 18,044 school bags equipped with school accessories and mine risk education materials to schools throughout northern, central and southern Abyei.

B. Rule of law issues

12. The Amiet common market continued to grow as the economic hub of the Abyei Area, attracting foreign nationals and traders from Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Uganda, as well as traders from Khartoum and Juba. It also provided opportunities for dialogue between the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya on continuing their mutual trading and coexistence. However, criminals also took advantage of the booming business and the increase in population at the market. During the reporting period, a total of 586 crimes were committed at the market, ranging from theft to incidents of shooting, robbery, cattle rustling and public disorder. The sporadic public disorder incidents and increase in criminal activities at the common market were addressed by the joint peace committee, which is advised and mentored by the traditional justice expert with the UNISFA community liaison section and the United Nations police. The joint peace committee, along with the joint traditional court, the market committee and the community protection committee, including members from both sides, is responsible for maintaining law and order at the market.

13. The joint traditional court at the Amiet common market, along with the community protection committee, continued to play a pivotal role in the dispensation of justice. They received guidance from the mission's traditional justice expert on basic legal principles, such as the right to a fair hearing, the rights of anyone accused of a crime and the need for judicial independence. UNISFA, along with other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, supported a request by the community protection committee to improve living conditions at the Amiet common market detention centre, based on a human rights due diligence policy.

14. The proliferation of makeshift residential huts in the vicinity of the market also posed a great threat to peace and stability in the market. In that regard, other markets emerged in Aniet, Agok, Sector South, and in Abyei's Mul-Mul market, creating a need for a greater United Nations police presence to maintain law and order amid an expanding population and increased number of returnees and internally displaced persons from South Sudan conflicts.

15. In that respect, in June, UNISFA issued notes verbales to South Sudan and the Sudan in which it encouraged them, in compliance with paragraph 7 of Security Council resolution 2416 (2018), to appoint the relevant officials to join UNISFA in a joint integrated planning exercise and in developing a road map towards the establishment of an Abyei police service. UNISFA followed up with two reminders but has yet to receive a response.

16. In the absence of an Abyei police service, the United Nations police continued to advise and mentor the community protection committees on maintaining law and order. More specifically, United Nations police conducted 1,830 interactive community patrols to mobilize members of the public to participate actively in peacebuilding initiatives; trained some 105 community protection committee members (90 men and 15 women) in basic policing principles and compliance with human rights standards; conducted 16 crime prevention and reduction awareness campaigns; and conducted seven road safety campaigns targeting drivers, pedestrians and schoolchildren. The United Nations police mentored members of the community protection committees at detention centres on international standards when handling accused and detained persons. Despite those efforts, overcrowding, the prolonged pretrial detention of accused persons, poor hygiene and sanitation, food shortages and the detention of juveniles persisted at the detention centres.

17. With regard to sexual and gender-based violence, on 10 April, UNISFA interviewed two women who had allegedly been raped at gunpoint by Misseriya at Wankir, Sector Centre, on 8 March as they gathered grass in the bush. The perpetrators had not been apprehended. Victims of sexual and gender-based violence often found it difficult to report such incidents for fear of being stigmatized. They also lacked access to health care and psychological or social support. UNISFA conducted seven awareness campaigns on sexual and gender-based violence in an effort to minimize the abuse of women's and children's rights.

C. Local-level peace process

18. UNISFA continued to facilitate community-level peace processes during the reporting period, particularly through regular joint meetings of the joint peace committees. The meetings were instrumental in addressing grievances, including those related to cattle rustling and other forms of crime, and in promoting dialogue and reconciliation between the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya, and, more recently, in addressing tension between the Misseriya and members of the South Sudanese Nuer community. UNISFA facilitated and observed 18 such meetings during the reporting period.

19. The issue of payment of "blood money" continued to be divisive during joint peace committee meetings, with aggrieved families of victims holding joint peace committee members accountable over delays. The Misseriya accused Ngok Dinka counterparts of a lack of commitment to the agreement on the payment of blood money. The Ngok Dinka community leaders clarified that they found it increasingly difficult to raise funds owing to lack of cooperation from the community. The joint peace committee therefore proposed in August that a joint conference be organized early in the coming dry season for traditional leaders of the two communities to deliberate on a number of outstanding issues, including the payment of blood money, ahead of the migration.

20. UNISFA, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and IOM, facilitated a post-migration conference on 25 June at Todach, Sector North, which brought together 20 participants each from the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities. At that conference, the communities discussed the lessons they had learned from the previous migration season and reached an agreement on various issues ranging from sharing water resources amicably and equitably to preserving the environment.

21. While most intercommunal tensions involved the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya, within the past year, friction between the Misseriya and the Nuer in the neighbouring Unity State in South Sudan has also spilled over into the Abyei Area. On 4 April, a joint peace committee meeting was held to deliberate on the rustling by the Nuer from South Sudan of 250 cattle belonging to the Misseriya at Mabok, Sector South, in the eastern migration corridor. The Misseriya held their Ngok Dinka counterparts responsible for aiding the Nuer rustlers. The stolen cattle, allegedly taken through Rumamier, Sector South, to Unity State were never recovered. Furthermore, an incident on 11 May at Marial Achak, Sector South, in which three Misseriya were killed by the Nuer prompted the joint peace committee on 17 May to invite representatives of the Nuer at the Amiet common market to their meetings. Tensions between the Ngok and Twic Dinka over alleged land encroachments by Twic Dinka in southern Abyei also persisted but have been comparatively low-key.

22. UNISFA also facilitated a number of other workshops and events affecting the local-level peace process. To shape their understanding of the roles of traditional justice practitioners in peacebuilding, human rights and promoting communal

harmony, a workshop on customary law, international human rights standards and peacebuilding was held on 8 and 9 May at Diffra, attended by Misseriya representatives, including customary court judges and community leaders. Two workshops on women's and gender issues were organized for the Ngok Dinka community from 17 to 19 April in Abyei, with a total of 300 participants, on the theme: "Together for a community of equality, peace and prosperity". For the Misseriya community, a workshop was organized at Diffra on 20 June involving 56 participants to raise awareness about gender equality and the importance of education. That followed two consultative meetings that had been held with Misseriya women by the UNISFA gender unit. From 25 April to 5 May, UNISFA facilitated a two-week youth sports tournament in Abyei, Todach and Amiet, with participants from both communities at the latter two locations, on the theme: "Abyei Youth Promoting Peace through Sports".

23. In order to better facilitate monitoring and reporting and mission interventions on the protection of women and children, as the Council requested in paragraph 28 of its resolution 2416 (2018), the mission has recruited a staff member whose visa request was submitted to the Government of the Sudan on 2 September.

D. Political process

24. While UNISFA operations continued to enhance peace and stability within the Abyei Area through a robust military presence and by supporting local-level dialogue, the parties to the Agreement of 20 June 2011 made little progress on the implementation of the commitments therein. No meetings of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee were held during the reporting period, the most recent meeting having been in November 2017.

25. To encourage both parties to meet their commitments and promote the resumption of regular meetings of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, UNISFA held separate meetings with Committee co-chairs, on 14 May in Khartoum and on 6 June in Juba. It also met with relevant government interlocutors, including representatives of the ministries of foreign affairs and defence of both parties.

26. UNISFA continued to interact with other stakeholders, including the African Union High-level Implementation Panel and regional organizations based in Addis Ababa to further efforts to advance the political dialogue. It also met with my Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan on 28 May in Addis Ababa, and with the leadership of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan on 5 June in Juba.

27. The African Union High-level Implementation Panel had intended for there to be a ministerial meeting following the Joint Political and Security Mechanism meeting, to discuss Abyei, and specifically the final status and the establishment of the interim institutions envisaged in the June 2011 Agreement. However, as the Mechanism met on 24 September, both foreign ministers were already committed to official duties at the General Assembly in New York. The Abyei issue was therefore deferred.

E. Humanitarian and recovery situation

28. Humanitarian and recovery needs remained significant in the Abyei Area. The dire economic situation in South Sudan and the Sudan has further affected the services and livelihoods of the communities throughout the Abyei Area. In addition, in 2018 the Abyei Area has faced new small-scale emergencies, including spikes in

malnutrition and flooding that have resulted in new displacements. Currently, some 2,000 people have been affected by floods, mainly in Athony, Sector South.

29. The United Nations and partners continued to assist some 182,000 vulnerable people across the Abyei Area, including: 87,000 people from the Ngok Dinka communities, including returnees; 15,000 Ngok Dinka displaced within the Abyei Area; 9,000 people displaced from neighbouring states in South Sudan; 34,000 people from the Misseriya communities; and 37,000 seasonal Misseriya migrants who had entered the area in October 2017 and migrated back in June and July.

30. To protect the most vulnerable people and support the rule of law, the aid community rehabilitated the existing detention facility in Abyei town and provided non-food items to the local communities as well as conflict-affected displaced people from South Sudan who transited through the Abyei Area. However, the absence of formal authorities in Abyei continued to pose challenges in carrying out and coordinating humanitarian and recovery interventions. While the aid community working in the area has limited capacity, community expectations are high.

31. The absence of development projects and the inability to deliver basic social services continued to have an adverse effect on people in the Abyei Area and their perception of UNISFA. With a view to enhancing community engagement and building local support, UNISFA facilitated the delivery of humanitarian assistance by providing logistical support, especially during the rainy season. From August, among other measures, special flights were arranged for humanitarian partners and force protection was provided in order to conduct humanitarian assessments and to address the mounting number of malaria cases. For example, a visit was made on 5 September to Athony, where 600–700 flood-affected people were located.

F. Administrative aspects and mission support

32. As at 3 October, the UNISFA military component stood at 4,531 personnel (4,289 troops, 130 military observers and 112 staff officers), against an authorized ceiling of 4,500. The mission has already identified 34 troops to be repatriated in order for the mission to conform to its authorized strength. The United Nations police strength stood at 36 officers — 25 male and 11 female — against an authorized total of 50. The number of civilian staff stood at 142 international staff, 33 United Nations Volunteers and 76 national staff, against an authorized total of 161 international staff, 33 United Nations Volunteers and 86 national staff. The Government of the Sudan issued 138 visas for UNISFA personnel during the reporting period, while 48 visas remained pending, for 3 international staff members, 10 military personnel, 11 United Nations police personnel, 1 United Nations Mine Action Service staff member, 9 official visitors and 14 contractors. A note verbale requesting visas for an additional 11 officers was sent to the Government of the Sudan on 10 September to ensure that police personnel reached the authorized ceiling of 50 officers, as the Council requested in paragraph 4 of its resolution 2416 (2018).

33. With the onset of rains late in May, the temporary operating bases of Um Khariat, Alal, Agony Tok and Dungoup were withdrawn. However, company operating bases remained deployed in the three sectors at Farouk, Diffra, Goli and Todach in Sector North; Dokura/Rumajak, Noong and Abyei in Sector Centre; and Marial Achak, Athony, Banton, Tejalei and Agok in Sector South.

34. Infrastructure and environmental installations are being upgraded at all camps. A new mission headquarters is being substantially completed. New accommodation facilities for military staff officers and observers and United Nations police within the Abyei camp are at an advanced stage of completion. Drainage in the Abyei camp has been improved, but partial flooding in July and August owing to severe rainy

spells indicates that drainage work needs to be expanded. Other infrastructure work to improve conditions in the Abyei camp has been suspended owing to a shortage of marram and fuel from the Sudan. During the rainy season, some company operating bases were cut off owing to bad road conditions, which made it challenging to perform maintenance tasks at those locations.

35. Of the 33 wastewater treatment plants planned for all UNISFA bases, 18 have been installed and the remaining 15 will be installed during the upcoming dry season. It is anticipated that all will be installed by 30 December. There was a delay from the Government of the Sudan in giving clearance to the contractor for the installation of the pending plants. Relying on local, individual contractors for the operation and maintenance of wastewater treatment plants exposes the mission to risk, owing to the lack of adequate skills or an accountability framework. To address that risk, a camp services contractor will be deployed to start work in the dry season.

36. During the reporting period, UNISFA operated three fixed-wing aircraft and four helicopters, of which two were under a letter-of-assist from the Government of Ethiopia. The mission undertook a total of 39 aerial patrols for the Abyei Area. The mission completed the rotation of two infantry battalions and one utility helicopter unit, for a total of 3,982 troops (1,993 inbound and 1,989 outbound), and the transportation of 330 tons of inbound and outbound troops' luggage through Kadugli airport. All of the luggage was transported by road between Kadugli and Abyei, as the Government of the Sudan continued to withhold permission to use the airstrip at Athony, Sector South, which is 90 per cent completed. Since June, owing to the poor road conditions, the mission started airlifting rations to troops at five company operating bases within the Abyei Area and to one team site of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. Such activities continue to put a strain on the mission's limited air assets. The mission continued to receive ground-handling support from the contracted service providers of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Entebbe, Uganda, and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur in Khartoum. In May, UNISFA aircraft supported a United Nations-African Union hybrid operation in Darfur for 22 delegates travelling from Khartoum to Addis Ababa.

37. Notwithstanding damage caused by a lightning strike on 11 September, the extent of which is currently being verified, UNISFA improved and expanded its information and communication technology infrastructure and the wireless coverage of its sectors and team sites. The aim is also to address welfare concerns, notably the sense of isolation of troops and staff members stemming from the remoteness of the deployment areas. Challenges in providing effective medical services include the lack of night flying capability for emergency casualty evacuation and medical evacuation and vulnerability to malaria.

III. Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism

A. Operations

38. During the reporting period, the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism planned 54 aerial monitoring missions, of which 43 were undertaken. All missions received clearances, but 11 patrols were cancelled, four of which owing to adverse weather conditions, five to non-availability of aircraft because of technical issues and two as a result of holidays. Aerial patrols continued to be a critical aspect of all operations under the Mechanism, particularly during the rainy season, when ground mobility is limited. On 3 October, an aerial patrol observed a suspected military camp near As Sumayah/Wierayan.

39. Ground operations from the sector headquarters in Gok Machar, South Sudan, remained hampered, with local communities preventing the movement of UNISFA personnel and demanding that land occupied by UNISFA and the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism be paid for or vacated. In particular, the Mission has been unable to conduct ground patrols and establish team sites within the 14 Mile Area. Even as the inaugural meeting of the ad hoc committee of the 14 Mile Area was under way in Abyei on 21 May, local people in Gok Machar staged a demonstration in front of the sector headquarters, blocking its access and demanding the removal of the sector commander. Despite efforts by the South Sudanese delegation to the ad hoc committee of 14 Mile Area, the community is opposed to any operations by the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, for fear that their land will be appropriated by the Sudan. On 31 May, traditional chiefs reiterated their objections to the planned deployment of team sites within the 14 Mile Area. At the second meeting of the ad hoc committee in Gok Machar, on 26 August, the South Sudanese delegation recommended that the matter be referred to the Joint Political and Security Mechanism. At the extraordinary meeting of that Mechanism, held under the auspices of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel in Addis Ababa on 24 September, South Sudan agreed to establish by 1 October a high-level team, which would work in collaboration with the ad hoc committee of the 14 Mile Area, to sensitize the communities, with the aim of allaying their concerns that the operations of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism would prejudice the current or future legal status of the border, and to allow free movement for the operations of that Mechanism by 10 October.

40. The Tishwin/Panakuac team site remained in the same location since its establishment on 26 January and continued to report on security forces' deployment within the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone. The Sudan maintained a well-armed military camp that included tanks and artillery pieces in location, as well as a police camp, while South Sudan had two police camps along the Heglig-Bentiu axis. All 53 ground patrols from the Tishwin/Panakuac team site were given clearances and 44 were undertaken, while 9 were cancelled owing to impassable roads caused by heavy rains.

41. Following on from the 24 September meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, South Sudan has not formed a high-level team to move forward sensitization efforts. Preliminary reconnaissance ground patrols prior to the arrival of the South Sudanese high-level sensitization team were to take place at Safaha/Kiir Adem and As Sumayah/Wierayan on 29 September and 1 October, respectively, but both had to be cancelled because the traditional chiefs did not give their permission to gain access to the 14 Mile Area.

42. Also at the 24 September meeting of the Mechanism, the parties requested UNISFA to deploy to Abu Qussa/Wunkur in Southern Kordofan, the Sudan, by 10 October, in order to establish a team site. On 3 October, a joint team comprising UNISFA personnel as well as Sudanese and South Sudanese national monitors proceeded to Alerie, 38 kilometres north of Abu Qussa/Wunkur, to ascertain whether the security conditions there would make it possible to establish a team site. At Alerie, the team met with Sudanese armed forces, who reported that the presence of rebel groups made it impossible for them to guarantee the security of the team site if it were deployed at Abu Qussa/Wunkur.

43. Regarding the phase I border crossing corridors, at the 24 September meeting of the Mechanism, the parties confirmed that all 10 crossings were open and requested UNISFA to verify free movement along the corridors. The above-mentioned high-level sensitization team has also been requested to undertake sensitization efforts in the Kosti-Renk corridor, to finalize its opening. For the Timsaha-Buram border crossing corridor, the parties requested the Mission's assistance in opening the

corridor. In that regard, the Mission awaits the plan of the African Union Border Programme technical team and the Joint Technical Border Corridor Committee to help assist with the marking.

44. At the 24 September meeting of the Mechanism, the parties also identified two additional corridors along the River Nile at Kosti-Renk and Talodi-Tonga. The parties agreed to present a plan for the remaining border crossing corridors at their next meeting, scheduled to be held in Juba on 12 October.

B. United Nations Mine Action Service operations

45. The United Nations Mine Action Service continued to support the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism with mine-protected vehicles, the provision of explosive ordnance disposal, demining capacity and medical and mechanical support. Teams from the Mine Action Service were currently deployed to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism headquarters in Kadugli and Gok Machar, and to the Tishwin/Panakuac team site. On 6 July, following the request by the Sudanese senior national monitor that approximately seven kilometres of road to the Toma South oil field be cleared of mines within the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, the Mine Action Service undertook limited demining operations until the request for termination was received from the Sudan on 31 July. No landmines or explosive remnants of war were encountered. The demining request had come in follow-up to the two sides jointly opening up the Toma South oil field in early July.

IV. Financial aspects

46. The General Assembly, by its resolution 72/289, appropriated the amount of $263.9 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019. As at 3 October 2018, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNISFA amounted to $78.5 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to $2,475.9 million. Troop costs have been reimbursed for the period up to 30 June 2018, while the costs of contingent-owned equipment have been reimbursed for the period up to 31 March 2018, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

V. Observations and recommendations

47. UNISFA fulfilled its core mandate by stabilizing the Abyei Area, in anticipation of a negotiated settlement of the Area and the border areas between South Sudan and the Sudan. However, neither party has taken advantage of that relative calm, and implementation of the agreements remains limited. As a result, while envisaged as an interim security force, UNISFA remains in place seven years after its establishment, with little progress having been made in the political process.

48. However, I would like to commend the commitment of the two communities in the Abyei Area, the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya, to the local-level peace process. Undeterred by the lack of progress made by the two national Governments regarding the resolution of the final status, they have achieved a degree of peaceful coexistence.

49. The presence of UNISFA in the Abyei Area and within the border monitoring mechanism remains crucial to sustaining the stability achieved thus far. However, the mission must adapt to the situation on the ground and work proactively to create the space needed for a viable political process. Essentially, UNISFA must continue to

support the two Governments and the African Union to work towards achieving a political resolution to the conflict.

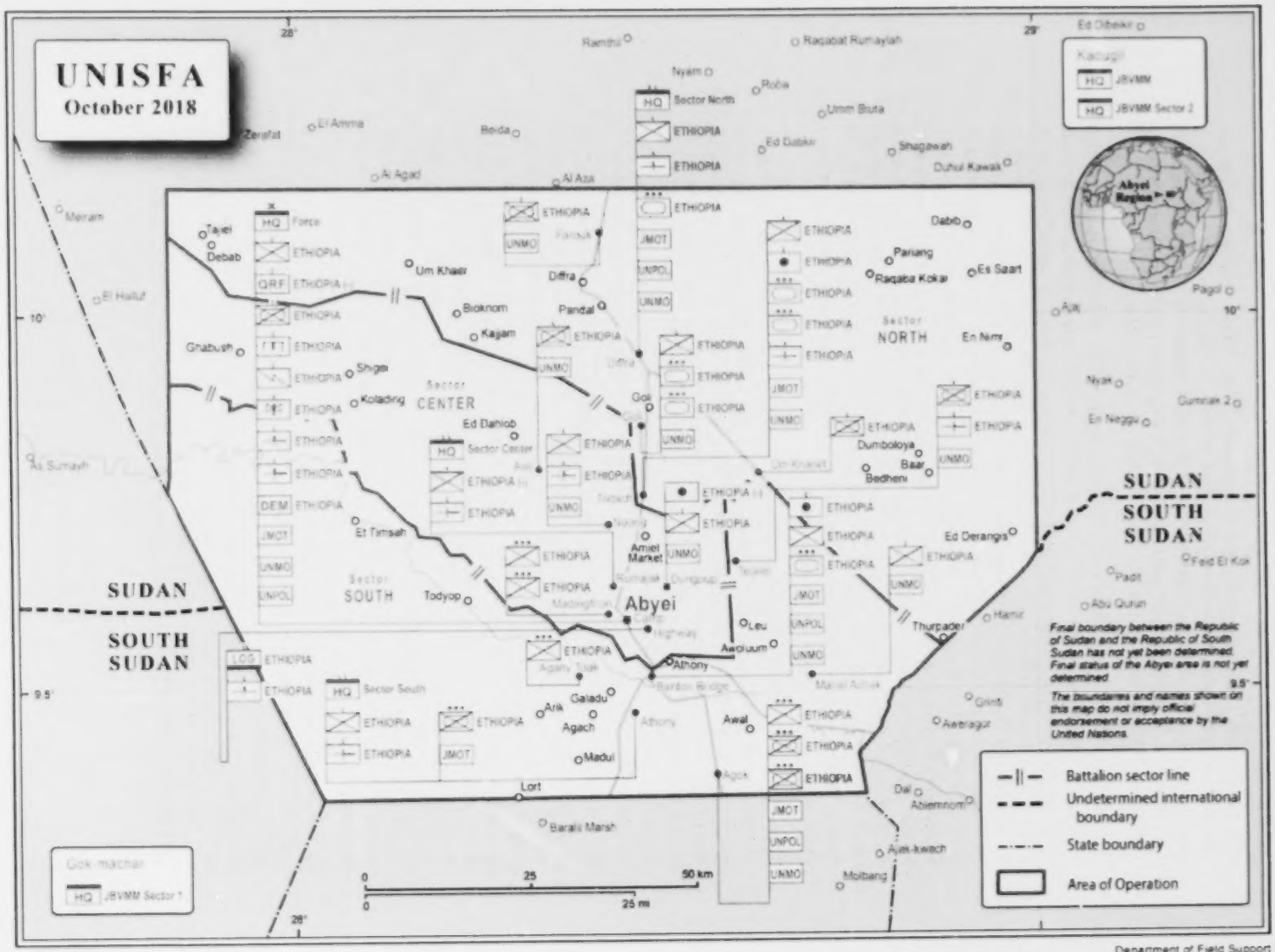
50. In the past year, the relationship between South Sudan and the Sudan has improved, in particular in the most recent few months, given the role of the Sudan in facilitating talks between the South Sudanese parties in Khartoum. I urge the Security Council to build upon that momentum by supporting both parties in their efforts to implement their agreements, and to work towards a political resolution.

51. In that regard, I urge the Council to view the progress described in the present report as only part of what could be achieved if UNISFA were enhanced to provide further support to the parties and the African Union. In the light of Council resolution 2378 (2017) on the reform of United Nations peacekeeping operations, by which in its paragraph 1 the Council stressed that the primacy of politics should be the hallmark of the approach of the United Nations to the resolution of conflict, I submitted in August a reconfiguration proposal to adapt UNISFA to realities on the ground. A reconfigured mission would benefit from the ongoing reconciliation process between South Sudanese opposition and government forces that resulted in the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, signed in Addis Ababa on 12 September. In the event that this initiative leads to a return to stability in South Sudan, the two sides would be better positioned to discuss the outstanding issues from the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005.

52. The efforts of South Sudan and Sudan remain central to progress, and the failure of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee and the Joint Political and Security Mechanism to hold regular meetings threatens the consolidation of the gains made so far. I urge both Governments to undertake discussions at the ministerial level to review the implementation of their agreements, and I pledge the support of the United Nations to such a focused endeavour. I believe that the two sides have the ability, political will and capital to resolve their outstanding disputes in a finite timeframe.

53. Building on the positive momentum in the region, I urge the Council to consider positively my reconfiguration proposal of August 2018 and the extension, with modifications, of support to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, whose invaluable work I would like to acknowledge. In the main, my proposal aims to enhance the capacity of UNISFA to support the political process with respect to the Abyei and border issues and the efforts of the African Union Commission and the African Union High-level Implementation Panel in that regard. I therefore recommend that the mandate of UNISFA be extended for one year based on the reconfiguration recommendations provided earlier, to assist the Governments and the communities to make additional progress towards achieving the goals they have set for themselves.

54. Finally, I would like to thank the new acting Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Gebre Adhana Woldezgu, who has led UNISFA in fulfilling its current mandate. I acknowledge with thanks the outstanding work of my Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan, Nicholas Haysom, who moves to an equally challenging assignment as Head of Mission of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia. I also wish to extend my gratitude to the African Union High-level Implementation Panel and the African Union Commission for their stewardship of the peace process.


UNISFA
October 2018
SUDAN
SOUTH SUDAN
Abyei
Sector NORTH
Sector CENTER
Sector SOUTH
Sector South
Sector North
Sector Center
Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined
The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
Battalion sector line
Undetermined international boundary
State boundary
Area of Operation
0 25 50 km
0 25 mi
Map No. 4467 Rev. 40 UNITED NATIONS
October 2018 (Colour)
Department of Field Support
Geospatial Information Section (formerly Cartographic Section)